

JESUS IS THE WAY, Pt. 2

JOHN 14.6

Last week, we began our study of the meaning behind the name, “*True Life Church*” – a meaning that is rooted in our text for this series of messages...

John 14:6 Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, except through me.”

Last week, we began our look at what Jesus meant when He said “I am the way.”

The world asks the question, “Is Jesus the only way?”

Before we can answer the question, we have to understand what is meant by the meaning of “the only way.”

Is Jesus the only way to where or what?

- If you are seeking the way to Nirvana, then you need to ask a Hindu Brahmin or to the teachings of Buddha as we studied this past Wednesday night.
- If you are seeking to understand the way of jihad and of what is required to please Allah, then you need to ask Mohammed or one of his followers.
- If you are looking for a religion that offers prosperity and perfect health, then you should call Kenneth Copeland and the other health and wealth preachers on TV, because Jesus is not your man.

But if the way you are seeking is the way to the kingdom of God, then there is no other way but through the person of Jesus Christ.

Last week we clearly established from Scripture that there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.

Whenever the subject arises of the uniqueness or the exclusivity of Jesus as the only way into heaven, many people begin with

our text for today. And John 14.6 does speak very clearly that Jesus is the way. The question is, what “way” was Jesus referring to here in this verse?

For generation after generation the first verses of chapter 14 have been used as funeral texts to comfort the survivors of those who have died. Verses 1-4 have been used to answer the question “What happens to us after we die?”

The answer derived from these verses is that we go to heaven and inhabit the mansion that Jesus has prepared for us there. So we sing...

I've got a mansion just over the hilltop
In that bright land where we'll never grow old.

In like manner, verse 6 has been used to answer the follow-up question, “Who gets to go to heaven?”

The answer derived from this verse is that only those who know Jesus as Savior and Lord go to heaven, for after all, Jesus said, “I am the way.”

I remind you that we have established that fact – that there is no other way for man to achieve heaven apart from the person and the grace of Jesus. Last week we read scripture after scripture that confirmed that doctrine.

Yet, once again, we have to ask ourselves what Jesus meant when He referred to “the way” in this particular verse and in this particular context.

And what did His disciples discern from hearing Jesus talk about “the way”?

I am not convinced that the question Jesus was answering here was related to heaven. Before you declare me a heretic, let me explain what I mean.

As a foundation, let me first make the following five points:

1. My understanding of God's purpose in creation was to implement the plan of redemption that He had already determined before the foundation of the world.

1 Peter 1:18 ...you were ransomed... 19 ...with the precious blood of Christ... 20 He was foreknown (foreordained) before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for your sake...

Rev. 13:8 ...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

2. God's purpose in the plan of redemption was not just to save men from the penalty of sin and to deliver them from the suffering of hell, but to conform the redeemed to the image of the Son.

John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Romans 8:29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

James 1:18 And it was of His own free will that He gave us birth as sons by His Word of Truth, so that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures – a sample of what He created to be consecrated to Himself. (Amp)

2 Cor. 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another.

3. In the fulness of time, the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Yet, when Jesus began His earthly ministry, He did not come inviting men to Heaven, but proclaiming that the kingdom of God had come to dwell among men.

Matt. 4:17 Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Brian McLaren

...Jesus primarily came not to proclaim a way out of hell for some after death, but rather a way into a better life

for all before death. His message was not about going to heaven after history, but about the kingdom of heaven coming to earth in history.

Christianity is not just a story of rescue and redemption, but it is a story of righteousness. It is the story of how God is building His kingdom through the lives of the redeemed here on earth.

It is better for kingdom purposes for God's disciples to remain on earth enduring suffering while engaging in service – that is, the spreading of the gospel of Christ and the glory of God to the ends of the earth.

4. Jesus did not come to redeem us just to rescue us from the world or to take us out of the world. In fact, when He prayed for His disciples and for us in John 17, He prayed...

John 17:15 I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. 18 As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world.

Eccl. 9:10 Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the grave, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom. (NIV)

In other words, the reason you are alive is so that you might work to carry out the will and purposes of God for there will be no opportunity to do so after you are dead.

Phil. 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

5. In the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – the word heaven is used about 123 times. We don't have time this morning to do an in-depth study of the word as it is used in the gospels except to point out the one thing that the gospels never say about heaven.

Not once in all of these 123 uses of the word heaven in the gospels is there every any reference to heaven as the eventual home of righteous souls.

We know that heaven is the eventual home of righteous souls, but the gospels never discuss heaven in those terms.

It is equally important to note that John uses the word heaven 16 times. Twelve of those times are limited to chapters three and six. And almost all of his uses of the word are to call attention to the fact that Jesus came down to earth from heaven.

With these thoughts as a basis for understanding, let's look once again at John 14.6. But let's do so by considering the context in which these words were spoken, the purpose Jesus had in speaking these words, and consider the meaning that the words had to those who were listening to Jesus on this particular day in this particular setting.

In chapter 13, the final supper that Jesus has with His disciples is ended. As a final testimony to the servant attitude that He assumed in the incarnation, Jesus has washed the feet of His disciples.

Then Judas leaves to carry out the act of betrayal that will lead to Jesus' arrest, and trials, and eventually His crucifixion. In v. 31...

John 13:31 When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him."

Jesus said, "Now," and you can almost hear the sigh of relief that accompanied it. Finally, the last steps were set in place and the reason for His coming would soon be realized.

In verse 33, Jesus tells his disciples, "I am going away and you cannot follow me. So let me leave you with a final word: You must love one another."

The love of the Father for the Son and the love of the Son for His disciples and for the church has been a theme in the book of John ever since 3.16.

It is a theme that John will continue to expound in his first epistle, 1 John.

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

But just as Jesus is teaching them this final lesson, Peter interrupts.

(Ad on TV re credit card, Chevy Chase...)

Peter just doesn't seem to get it. He ignores the commandment to love one another and asks where Jesus is going (v. 36).

Jesus amends his previous statement by saying, "Where I am going you cannot go now, but later you will follow me."

It is evident that Peter was not thinking about heaven here, for he continues to argue his point. "Why can't I go with you now? I am willing to go all the way to death for you."

Jesus knew Peter better than Peter knew himself and warned him that before the night was over, when the opportunity came to die for Jesus, Peter would deny knowing Jesus three times before morning.

But where is Jesus going? To heaven? He has not discussed heaven as either a destination or a reward up to this point, so why mention it now?

It is true that John 13.1 said that the hour had come that Jesus would "depart out of this world to the Father." But that would follow the events of the passion week and the resurrection and would precede His coming back to dwell forever with His church in the person of the Holy Spirit.

For now, the place where Jesus was going that the disciples could not go was to suffering and death. Jesus knew – and we

know from history – that all of the disciples would eventually suffer for the name of Jesus and for the cause of the kingdom of God. In fact, all of the apostles died a martyr's death except John. But for now, they could not follow Him because they were not prepared.

Verse 14.1

Jesus is speaking in response to Peter's concerns, and He said, "Don't worry about it. You believe in God; believe in me."

There is a critical point here and we must be sure that we do not miss it by being distracted by the reward of heaven. Jesus called on Peter and the disciples to believe – not in heaven – but in Him.

Then He added, "I am going to prepare a place for you in 'my Father's house.'"

That phrase can easily be a reference to heaven, but in the context I believe it refers to more than just a place of reward for the righteous.

By preceding them in suffering and pain and persecution and death, Jesus is preparing a place for them in the kingdom of God – in the house (or family) of God. Each of them will have a place of service as each of us has been called to a designated place that we will come to know only after we experience the same thing these disciples did.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Then and only then would they be prepared to follow Him into the place of suffering and pain and persecution and death.

Jesus was going to prepare a place for them – not a way to a place, because He was the way.

Verses 3-4

Now it is Thomas' turn not to get it.

Verse 5

Obviously from his question, Thomas was not thinking about heaven. He said, "We don't know where you are going."

But we should not be surprised by such a response.

Every time Jesus mentioned anything about his death, the disciples were confused and simply could not comprehend how the Messiah could experience death.

Now, since they did not know the where, it is certain that they did not recognize the way.

But Jesus said, "...the way you know...I am the way."

"I am going where you cannot yet go, though you will soon follow me. And the way to where you will follow is me."

"Yes, I am going away, but I will come again. After that, everywhere that I am, there you will be also."

Remember earlier that I pointed out that verse 6 is typically used to refer to Jesus' exclusivity – to answer the question, "Who gets to go to heaven?" or "Will people who have never heard of Jesus get to go to heaven?"

But Peter was not considering heaven with his question "Where are you going and why can't I go with you now?"

Thomas wasn't asking about the way to heaven. He was just as puzzled as Peter about the way to some place that he could not identify.

So what did Jesus mean by His answer "I am the way..."?

He answered that question in the last part of the verse: "No man comes to the Father except through me." He is the way to the Father and into the Father's kingdom – not just the way to heaven.

Verse 7

Now it is Philip's turn to have an "I don't get it" moment.

Verse 8

Listen now to these next verses as Jesus answers the questions of His disciples. It is a long and protracted answer, but listen to the focus of what Jesus is saying here.

The topic is not heaven or the way to heaven or who gets to go to heaven.

The focus is Christ himself. Listen to how many times Jesus makes reference to himself.

Verses 9-15

Throughout these verses Jesus reinforces to His disciples that He is **The Way**. He is not just a spiritual leader, not just a Savior, but that He is God in the flesh. The way one finds peace and forgiveness and reconciliation with the Father is in the person of the Son.

Verses 16-17

Jesus said, "I am **The Truth**, and now He declares that the Truth will never leave us because the Truth lives inside of us in the person of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 18-19

Jesus said, "I am **The Life**. You will see me again after I am resurrected, and because I live, you shall also live. Because my life is eternal and dwells in you, therefore you also will have eternal life."

When you study through the book of John, you realize that the point of his message is not so much that we have heaven to look forward to in the sweet by and by, but that heaven has come down to man in the person of Jesus Christ.

Verses 20

What "day" is this to which Jesus is referring?

He has just mentioned the sending of the Holy Spirit. There is coming a day very soon – the Day of Pentecost – when these disciples would experience the baptism in that same Holy Spirit

and would realize a power unlike anything they had ever known before.

William Kelly, Lectures on the Gospel of John

It is not the future glory, but present grace putting us in the closest vital association with Him who has gone into heavenly glory, and yet is one with us here, as we with Him there, by the Spirit given that we might know it all.

TRUE LIFE CHURCH begins with the fact that Jesus is the way into the kingdom of heaven – into the house of God. He is the truth of God. He is the life that is available to those who depend on Him – not just any life, but life more abundantly.

We must never forget that Christ **is** the kingdom of God – that we are dependent on Him for sustenance and strength in that kingdom – that we are His ambassadors commissioned with the task of carrying His gospel to the ends of the earth.

Jesus is the Way. Everything begins and ends with Him.

And it is certainly **TRUE** that there is no **LIFE** and no **CHURCH** apart from Him.